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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5667  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 5453  
RHEBAAA/DOE WASHDC  
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RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0147

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 001906

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC AND ISN/NESS  
DOE FOR HE-1 AND HE-23  
NRC FOR OIP AND COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [IAEA](#) [OTRA](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA CONFIRMS PLANS TO EXPAND NUCLEAR POWER  
PROGRAM

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 1888

[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 01227 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified, and not  
for Internet distribution.

[1](#)2. (U) President Nestor Kirchner presided over a ceremony  
August 23 at which Planning Minister Julio De Vido announced  
that Argentina was going to expand its nuclear power program  
and reactivate a dormant uranium enrichment facility. The  
announcement, which had been expected (Ref A), described four  
pillars upon which Argentina's enhanced nuclear energy  
capabilities would rest. To wit: The GOA plans to finish  
construction of the approximately 700MW Atucha II nuclear  
reactor in Buenos Aires province; start design and  
feasibility studies on a possible fourth reactor (Argentina  
currently has two functional nuclear power plants); extend  
the life of the Embalse reactor in Cordoba Province, which  
had been scheduled to cease operations in 2011; and reopen a  
uranium enrichment facility in the town of Pilcaniyeu. De  
Vido also said that the GOA would resume production of heavy  
water at a plant in Neuquen Province, with a goal of  
producing 600 tons in three years.

[1](#)3. (U) Conspicuously absent from De Vido's announcement was  
any mention of Argentina signing an Additional Protocol to  
the NPT (Ref A). De Vido took pains, however, to reassure  
the audience that the Argentine nuclear program's designs  
were wholly peaceful, that it would be totally transparent,  
and that it would operate under strict IAEA safeguards.

[1](#)4. (SBU) A less-widely commented upon aspect of the GOA  
announcement was the revelation that Argentine nuclear  
engineers had arrived at a proprietary, self-contained design  
for a nuclear power plant. The design shown to the public  
was listed as producing an output of only 25MW, but on August  
24 GOA Secretary of Science and Technology Tulio del Bono  
told Emboff that the design can easily be modified to  
generate 100MW to 300MW of power. Del Bono explained that  
Argentina was pinning its export hopes on the new design,  
which it calls CAREM. The idea is that the CAREM design will  
find its niche in a nuclear power plant market that has a  
dearth of mid-sized competition. Argentina hopes to sell the  
design as a power solution for isolated areas that are not  
part of a larger power grid.

MATERA